
Presidential Actions

(September 1, 2:00 p.m.) President Bush is directing federal agencies throughout the government to do all in their power to assist the victims of Hurricane Katrina. The top priority is to save and sustain lives.

President Bush convened a Cabinet-level task force on Hurricane Katrina response and recovery. Residents of the Gulf Coast states affected by the hurricane have lost loved ones, lost homes, and been displaced from their communities, and they will have the full support of the federal government.

*The President asked former Presidents Bush and Clinton to assist in hurricane relief efforts. President Bush on Thursday said, "In the days ahead, the former Presidents will ask Americans to open their hearts and their wallets to help those in need. And they're going to talk to large corporations and small businesses and individual citizens across the nation. The contributions will benefit the relief organizations that are doing vital work on the ground. We're going to take a look and make sure that the money raised is money needed."

*The President has given the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) authority to coordinate the response. The President announced that Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff will chair the interagency task force, while Michael Brown, DHS Undersecretary for Emergency Preparedness and Response, is serving as the Administration's lead on the ground.

*The President has called for the coordination of all parties involved in the response and relief efforts. Federal, state, and local governments are working side by side to deliver relief to the areas physically damaged by Hurricane Katrina and to communities across the South that will be affected in the aftermath of the storm. Efforts and resources are focused on saving lives, sustaining lives, and supporting long-term recovery.

*The President has called on all Americans to support the relief and rescue efforts through charitable contributions and aid. Americans who wish to contribute can do so by contacting charities that are assisting with hurricane relief. For example, citizens can call the Red Cross at 1-800-HELP-NOW (1-800-435-7669) or make an online contribution to the Disaster Relief Fund at www.redcross.org.

Task Force Response

*On Tuesday, Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff activated the National Response Plan to ensure that help gets to those most in need. The National Response Plan (NRP) fully mobilizes the resources of the entire federal government to support response and recovery efforts for state and local authorities - particularly in the event of a catastrophic incident. Secretary Chertoff has declared the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina an incident of national significance - the first-ever use of this designation.

*FEMA is moving resources and supplies into the hardest hit areas as quickly as possible. To date, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has deployed more than 50 Disaster Medical Assistance Teams, more than 25 Urban Search and Rescue Task Forces, eight Swift Water Rescue Teams, and two Incident Support Teams. FEMA is also working to deliver water, ice, meals, medical supplies, generators, tents, and tarps. There are currently more than 1,700 trucks which have been mobilized to move these supplies into position.

*FEMA and the Army Corps of Engineers are working with Louisiana officials to repair the breaches in the levees to stop the flooding in New Orleans.

*The federal government is working to help relocate those displaced by the hurricane. Those in New Orleans who were taking shelter in the Superdome are being moved to the Astrodome in Houston, and FEMA is working to provide tents and shelter. In addition, the Departments of Housing and Urban Development, Agriculture, and Health and Human Services (HHS) are working with local communities to provide help to those who have been displaced from their homes.

*This morning, Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman announced that the strategic petroleum reserve will be used to help fulfill demand for oil. Refineries that are short on supplies of crude oil will have access to supplies from the strategic petroleum reserve to help avert a disruption in the supply of gasoline to drivers and businesses across the country.

*The Energy Department is working to restore electricity to affected areas. The Energy Department has deployed personnel and is working with local power companies, local authorities, and state authorities to help get electricity functioning. The Energy Department is also taking steps to ensure the repair and continuity of oil and gas pipelines that may have been affected by power outages.

*EPA has issued fuel waivers to expedite relief and recovery. EPA has

issued temporary waivers to make additional supplies of gasoline and diesel fuel available in those areas of the country with shortages of specific fuel blends required under the Clean Air Act.

*The Department Of Defense is moving military resources into the Gulf States to aid in rescue and recovery. Eight Navy ships have moved into the area with water, food, medicine, hospital facilities, berthing, and more. DOD has responded to all FEMA requests and is providing logistical help, including helicopters, activation of air stations in strategic areas, and strategic lift support.

*The United States Coast Guard is conducting search and rescue. The Coast Guard has rescued and assisted thousands of people in the affected areas, and its efforts will continue until all those at risk are safe.

*Health And Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt has declared a public health emergency, which facilitates provision of medical services in the affected region. HHS has delivered requested medical supplies to Louisiana, including basic first aid materials, blankets and patient clothing, suture kits, sterile gloves, stethoscopes, blood pressure measuring kits, and portable oxygen tanks. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is working to address the risk of disease caused by Hurricane Katrina. HHS has placed 415 Public Health Service Officers on stand-by for deployment to support medical response in the affected states. HHS and CDC are working with local officials to identify hospital facilities, distribute medical supplies, and execute a public health plan to control disease and other risks to public health.